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CONTENTS

25X1

JAPAN-USSR: Japanese prepare for talks on joint
Siberian development. (Page 5)

25X1

WEST GERMANY: Brandt compromises on East German visa
issue. (Page 9)

25X1

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/08/27 : CIA-RDP79T00975A023900020002-3

Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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25X1

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JAPAN-USSR: Japanese officials apparently have begun preliminary work on an agreement for economic development of Siberian resources.

In recent weeks, the Liberal Democratic Party leadership and Japanese Government bureaucracies have agreed that economic issues should be separated from the problem of a Japan-Soviet peace treaty. Moscow's intransigence on the return of the Northern Territories, combined with aggressive Soviet Embassy lobbying and pressure from Japanese business, apparently helped to overcome Japanese Foreign Ministry desires to use the economic issue as a political lever.

25X1

A good many issues remain to be resolved before the Japanese will actually initial any agreement, however. The Soviets have not indicated, for example, how they plan to handle the \$1 billion in financing they have requested for the Tyumen oil project, nor have they yet given the Japanese sufficient information and guarantees about future petroleum and natural gas supplies for Japan.

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WEST GERMANY: Open criticism by leading West Berlin politicians and members of Chancellor Brandt's faction in the Bundestag has forced Bonn to modify its decision to stop subsidizing the cost of visas for travel to East Germany.

Last year Bonn paid nearly \$5 million to the East German regime for visas issued to West Berliners alone. This arrangement, embodied in the inner-German transit agreements, is particularly advantageous to West Germany because it underscores Bonn's responsibility for West Berlin. Moreover, it simplifies travel procedures and thus leads to a greater number of visits to the East.

As a part of its program to cut the federal budget announced last month, the Brandt government said it would no longer make the visa payments after 1 July. Bonn had thus hoped to save nearly \$30 million a year. Berlin leaders of all three major political parties, however, reacted with dismay, claiming the decision was evidence of Bonn's flagging interest in the political status of West Berlin. In addition, Mayor Schuetz and Senat officials publicly displayed their resentment at Bonn's lack of prior consultation. This situation created enough sympathy and support among Social Democrats in the Bundestag to confront Brandt with an unexpected revolt within his own party.

The general negative reaction to Bonn's decision has forced federal officials to draft a compromise solution. At a meeting of state presidents on 23 February, Chancellor Brandt and Mayor Schuetz apparently agreed that West Germans will pay for their own visas, while the Senat--with "under the table" financial assistance from Bonn--will pick up the tab for the West Berliners.



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